

Oral history with 85 year old white female, Concord, Massachusetts (Transcription)

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Speaker: There was a very definite difference especially in the children of those that lived in town and those that lived outside of town. Those children that lived in town had all the advantages. They could take dancing lessons, music lessons, and had more social life among themselves because they lived close together, where out here in the country, we were isolated. There was no such thing as dancing lessons or music lessons or anything of that sort. Our folks couldn't take us to town for anything like that. We spent our time playing with the animals on the farm. We had rabbits, chickens, cows, and I talked my father into letting me have a couple of pigs and I had a goat. I loved working in the garden and tending to the flowers. So our life was entirely different. The children in town used to like to come out here and play with my goat and go on picnics. It was a real luxury to me to get invited to go into town to play with someone or have dinner at the Inn with a friend of mine that was living at the Inn. This was when I was older and had my bicycle and could get there. These children also had the advantage of having their parents have time to help them with their schoolwork. Where out here, when it was time for me to work on my studies, my parents were either busy or tired and needed time for themselves to read. I think in the country children were taught to be more self-reliant and not expect the parents to help them with the work that was the children's work. We were provided for in all the essential ways, such as food and clothing, but I think in the country people felt their children had an obligation to carry on our own work particularly school work.

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Speaker: We had two schools in Concord in my day. The kindergarten and first grade were in the Ripley School, which was the former high school and was where the Hunt Gym now stands. Then we went to the Emerson School which was across the street which is now the old youth center, and there we went through the eighth grade except the second and third grades. They were over in the high school which is now a vacant lot across from the library. Between the Emerson School and the high school was a little school that had been moved there from where the library is now and we had what we call today manual training. From the eighth grade, girls and all went over there for one hour a day and in high school it was an elective. There was also a school in West Concord which stood on the playyard of what is now the Harvey Wheeler School. When the West Concord people were ready for high school, they came to Concord center by electric car, which were around by that time. Children from Bedford came here to high school by electric car and the children from Lincoln also came here but by train. Also the children from Carlisle came here, and in my class, there was only one that came from Carlisle by horse and carriage every day. The transportation to school for most of us was by barge, which was on wheels. In the winter, it was the same type of vehicle but on runners. Hay was put in the bottom of it but we used to freeze to death. It took a long time, those horses were so slow. But in the summertime we would have the curtains up on the barge and we didn't mind the ride. On the last day school, everybody all around town collected wild flowers and decorated

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Speaker: the barges to see who had the most beautiful barge. But the winters were agony. After the eighth grade you had to find your own transportation which was usually the bicycle except in the winter when your father might have to drive you. The early 1900s saw a new type of transportation, the automobile, come into use. I remember the first automobile that appeared on Lowell Road, my father came dashing into the house calling us all to come look at the horseless carriage. Everybody used to go out for a ride on

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Sunday afternoons and everyone had a special or dress-up carriage for Sundays. It was kept neat and clean and covered over during the week. I can remember the first experience we had meeting an automobile. We were out riding and my father saw an automobile coming and made everyone get out of our carriage and over the stone wall while he held the horse. The same thing happened when we saw an electric car on a visit to my grandparents in Bedford. As the automobiles came in, there were some people who still retained their horses and carriages. The people in town had stables behind their houses for their driving horses and carriages. In the country the farmers had farm horses and a driving horse for their carriage for the women. In town many of the women had maids, out here we had hired girls, and those women that had maids would go out riding in the afternoons. One or two of them had coachmen. The ladies would sit in the back with their parasols. I have one of those little parasols that I carried in a parade last year. I remember <gap> from

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Speaker: Monument Street, the <gap> sisters from Sudbury Road and Nine Acre Corner, and <gap> on Strawberry Hill Road. <gap> had a very handsomely outfitted coachman. The electric car revolutionized country travel. It brought people to Concord and took people out of Concord. It was a very happy day when the electric cars came especially for the women. It made them more independent. They could go anywhere themselves. One of the things the electric cars did was to give us Lexington Park. This was a joy spot enjoyed by adults and children. It was a park on the Lexington-Bedford line. It was an attractive spot with animals for the children and a fairgrounds with a stage where they had very satisfactory vaudeville entertainment once a week. There was an afternoon and evening performance, and it was very good, high-class vaudeville. When the automobile came, people could then go to more distant spots and the park didn't last long after that. With more and more automobiles being used, there became a need for better roads. Macadam

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roads were developed using crushed stone, so many, many stone walls were taken down and crushed for the new roads. After World War I, life in Concord was entirely different. The men came back after having the experience of being away, and some had to find different employment than what they had been doing. It just seemed the whole nature of the town changed particularly in growth. With the coming of automobiles, more people were coming out from the cities and building began. Of course, with the war, industry came in which hadn't been

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Speaker: flourishing before. For instance, the harness factory in West Concord was booming making harnesses for the horses used in the war. Business seemed to grow and there were new avenues of business. end of excerpt M11 A(1)